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DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, SE GRATION, AF/SPG, AF/C, IO, PRM  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND HUDSON  
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SUBJECT: THE UN UNVEILS THE RESULTS OF THE JOINT UN-GNU ASSESSMENT

REF: A) KHARTOUM 405  
B) KHARTOUM 318  
C) KHARTOUM 313  
D) KHARTOUM 311  
E) KHARTOUM 306  
F) KHARTOUM 299

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) BEGIN SUMMARY. On March 24, the UN released a statement on the joint UN-Government of National Unity (GNU) assessment of humanitarian needs in Darfur following the early March expulsions of non-governmental organizations (NGO). According to the UN, the expulsions resulted in significant short- and long-term gaps in the provision of food, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, health care, and nutrition assistance. Despite considerable media spin in Sudan on how the joint assessment shows there is no hunger in Darfur, the GOS formally initialed the document, accepting in writing the results of the assessment and committed itself to filling major gaps through the end of the year. The assessment also identified gaps in managerial and technical capacity, program design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Following the statement on the assessment, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan commented that as a result of the expulsions "the humanitarian architecture is broken, and the atmosphere of trust in Darfur is gone," and briefed principal donors on the situation and steps forward. END SUMMARY.

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THE LONG-AWAITED ASSESSMENT RESULTS  
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¶2. (SBU) On March 24, CDA Fernandez attended a last minute briefing chaired by the UN Deputy Special Representative for the Secretary General (DSRSG) for Humanitarian Affairs, Ameerah Haq. The late-night meeting was called so Haq could immediately brief donors on the findings of the joint March 11-19 UN-Government of Sudan (GoS) Darfur assessment. Earlier in the day, Haq released a statement on the joint UN-GNU assessment of humanitarian needs in Darfur resulting from the March NGO expulsions. According to the UN, the expulsions will cause significant short- and long-term gaps in the provision of food, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, health care, and nutrition assistance. The assessment also identified gaps in managerial and technical capacity, program design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. While UN staff noted cooperation between the GNU and UN during the assessment, UN officials reported considerable disagreements between the GNU and UN regarding the content of the assessment results which resulted in two days of bickering with regime officials. At the end, Haq gave the regime an March 24 noon

ultimatum to either accept the results and sign off on them or the UN would issue them independent of the GOS. The Sudanese reluctantly agreed. UN staff also reported excessive pressure from the GNU to include information in the assessment report on why the GNU expelled certain NGOs and planned UN actions to fill the resulting humanitarian gaps.

13. (SBU) The assessment determined that gaps in sanitation and hygiene pose a significant, immediate threat to populations in Darfur, while the lack of safe drinking water is expected to constitute a challenge in the coming months. Currently, the GNU, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and NGOs are providing more than 850,000 individuals with potable water. However, the assessment team anticipates water shortages in the majority of Darfur internally displaced person (IDP) camps in the next two to four weeks if mechanisms to provide adequate fuel and spare parts to run water pumps are not put in place. The expulsions completely disrupted sanitation and hygiene activities, leaving 989,000 IDPs without vital waste disposal, latrine maintenance, soap distribution, and hygiene education. Without immediate assistance, rates of acute watery diarrhea and other diseases are expected to increase in Darfur IDP camps in the coming months, particularly during the June to September rainy season.

14. (SBU) Up to 650,000 people in Darfur currently lack access to adequate health care, according to the assessment. Although the UN World Health Organization and the GNU Ministry of Health (MOH) are working to address health gaps, the assessment team noted that government health staff are unable to access all affected areas. Moreover, medical supplies, staff retention, and salary payment mechanisms are only in place until the end of April. The assessment team further noted that the expulsions significantly reduced the

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number of health staff in Darfur—from 444 to 192 medical staff in West Darfur—and lowered the level of services available, as doctors comprised a significant proportion of the staff reductions.

15. (SBU) According to the assessment, the expulsions suspended relief supply and shelter distributions for more than 115,000 households, or 692,000 people, in Darfur, a gap that will become more acute as the rainy season approaches. The UN noted that humanitarian organizations must complete relief supply and shelter needs assessments by late April in order for organizations to conduct distributions in May. However, Haq reported that the NGO expulsions significantly hindered transport, logistics, assessments, and distributions systems.

16. (SBU) Although the UN World Food Program (WFP) is conducting a one-time, two-month food distribution to approximately 1.1 million individuals previously supported by expelled NGOs, the assessment team noted gaps in program sustainability, livelihood and malnutrition support, and food distribution management and coordination. Comparing the one-off food distribution to a "Band-Aid" placed over a serious wound, Haq said that the NGO expulsions affected the treatment of 30 percent of severe acute malnutrition cases and 18 percent of moderate acute malnutrition cases. As of March 13, UNICEF reported that approximately 2,379 severely malnourished children and 4,900 moderately malnourished children were at risk of not receiving nutrition treatment due to the closure and reduced operation of nutrition programs in Darfur and northern Sudan. Currently, WFP is conducting only general food distributions and is unable to provide specialized support to malnourished children admitted to the expelled NGOs' feeding centers throughout Darfur. The current WFP distribution may be adequate until early May; however, the assessment concluded that as the hunger gap develops in May and June, WFP will need new and experienced partners to carry out food distributions for more than 1 million people in Darfur and these are not in place. The assessment team further reported gaps in livelihood support, noting that humanitarian agencies would need to resume livelihood interventions prior to the upcoming planting season.

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DISPUTING THE RESULTS  
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17. (SBU) While UN staff noted cordial cooperation between the GNU and UN during the assessment, UN officials reported considerable disagreements between the two regarding the content of the assessment results. Following heated discussions on March 23, the GNU agreed to a compromise with UN officials on the text of the executive summary. Both parties agreed to compromises regarding the language in the summary in order to formalize and sign the document.

However, shortly thereafter, the GNU officials reversed the approval and requested additional changes to the document. (NOTE: According to USAID, on March 24, the UN released the original executive summary, after notifying the GNU, not wanting the results to languish any longer. The UN reports that the GNU continues to drag its feet on addressing the situation, although both the GNU and UN representatives who participated in the assessment agreed unanimously regarding the loss of capacity and humanitarian gaps created by the expulsions. END NOTE.)

18. (U) According to local pro-regime media reports, GNU Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) Commissioner Hassabo Abderahman announced on March 23 that separate preliminary briefings by sub-committees of the joint Sudan, UN and African Union (AU) needs assessment mission to Darfur show that Darfur would not be affected by the absence of the 13 expelled international NGOs, and that the field survey has shown no humanitarian gap in the areas of health, food, water, and non-food items. Al-Ayaam daily also quotes the Commissioner as saying that the Sudanese government has called on all parties currently operating in Darfur to continue operations through short- and long-term plans to ensure the flow of services to affected populations. Hassabo also stated that the people of Darfur have adequate food stocks to last until May. Additionally, Al-Ahdath daily reported that Commissioner Hassabo announced that the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and OCHA have agreed to review the agreement on humanitarian work signed earlier between Sudan, UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs. Hassabo also noted that the GNU HAC held a separate meeting with the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Hilde Johnson, and emphasized that NGOs should reduce overhead expenses to allow more funds to be used to assist the needy. According to the media reports, the MOH also agreed that the preliminary results discredit fears of a looming humanitarian crisis. (NOTE: The media accounts are yet another example of GNU officials contradicting those (even from their own government) on the ground in Darfur. END

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DONORS BRIEFING WITH THE UN  
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19. (SBU) On March 24, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator Ameerah Haq provided principal donors, including the U.S., with an update on the assessment and announced results. Haq underscored the temporary measures taken by UN agencies and remaining NGOs, including the one-time food distribution, but highlighted UN concerns about the long-term sustainability of the measures and an impending humanitarian crisis. Noting that the GNU wanted to focus attention on the fact that food is currently available, Haq repeated UN caveats to the GNU that food is not just about distribution, but the holistic design of a system from the planning to the delivery. Prior to the expulsions, four key NGO partners delivered life-saving food to 1.1 million people in Darfur.

110. (SBU) Despite the best, temporary measures and completed assessment, humanitarian agencies are unsure who will meet the essential humanitarian gaps after April. In the coming days and weeks, nearly 700,000 people will not receive non-food items (NFIs) unless the UN Joint Logistics Center finds a new implementing partner to replace CARE; 650,000 individuals do not have full access to health services; nearly 1 million people will lack any waste disposal; and as the rainy season arrives, IDP and host populations will have continued and increased vulnerability to water and sanitation problems, leading some humanitarians to fear a return to the record-high malnutrition levels seen in 2006 throughout Darfur.

¶11. (SBU) Haq and UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Darfur Toby Lanzer stressed that the assessment made painfully clear that technical capacity and expertise in program design, management, and monitoring were lost with the expelled partners. This is a significant gap that will take a very long time to replace no matter how it is done. Some of the expelled organizations worked in Sudan for 20 to 30 years, and such experience cannot be replaced overnight by new actors or inexperienced staff. Another significant gap is accurate and detailed monitoring of humanitarian programs and projects. According to UN staff, the report includes key baseline indicators and a section on monitoring in an attempt to establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure people receive assistance. In order to facilitate collection of health data, the GNU has committed to pay the salaries of health workers and sanitation staff; however, the UN emphasized to need to confirm that doctors and nurses were placed in clinics for the longer term, not just on a rotation basis.

¶12. (SBU) Appealing for fast and focused action, Haq repeated UN requests for the GNU to release project assets to sector leads, facilitate fast-tracked technical agreements, travel permits, and visas. Charge Fernandez thanked the UN for tremendous work, noted deep disappointment that none of the expelled NGOs will be permitted to work in Sudan, and that the international community may ask whether it received anything but more empty assurances from the regime for its longtime dedication and deep coffers. Donors also asked about the plan to nationalize Sudan's aid system, one that UN staff noted was long-term and would require significant building of capacity. According to the UN, the expulsion left 6,500 Sudanese staff unemployed and the ten NGOs working in Darfur lost 3,142 technical staff. In coming days, some of the staff will be absorbed into other projects and programs. During the assessment, the teams noted that some of the staff continue to report to work; however, the loss of management, guidance, and support is plainly apparent. Despite promising to assist Sudanese actors with building capacity, UN staff also noted that IDP leaders in camps continue to insist on the return of the expelled NGOs and refuse to take any assistance from other organizations. Local government officials in Darfur offered claims that the GOS is providing funds to fill the gaps. However, they confided to humanitarian actors that local authorities have no such funds. Without money, they admitted the humanitarian situation in Darfur may get increasingly dire in days to come.

¶13. (SBU) During the briefing, the UN also noted that, despite public pledges to the contrary, the Sudanese government continues to hold passports of international staff participating in the close-out of the humanitarian programs. (Note: At least three of these international staff are U.S. citizens. End Note.) In coming days, the UN plans to solicit a list of the affected employees and look into efforts to facilitate the release of their documentation. Staff in Khartoum remain traumatized, and fearful of the government's next steps. Haq summed up the expulsions by explaining

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forcefully, "The humanitarian architecture is broken, and the atmosphere of trust in Darfur is gone."

¶14. (SBU) After the briefing, Haq told CDA that the UN had done the best it could and the fact that the regime had now formally initialed (albeit reluctantly) the findings meant that it was "on the hook in the coming weeks and months" if concerns about deteriorating health conditions in IDP camps begin to surface. The important thing will be to have "aggressive and frequent monitoring" by the UN and international community. CDA agreed but expressed fears that the regime will chip away at the ability to monitor in order to achieve "a slow and unobserved death" for Darfur's teeming IDP camps over the next months. Ameerah that monitoring the signing of technical agreements between remaining NGOs and the regime (none of the remaining NGOs has such an agreement which means they are technically unable to work in Sudan and function under a constant dangling regime "sword of Damocles") is one way to monitor the regime's intentions in the next two weeks, as they have agreed to do so now. She also noted that she had inserted language "helpful to the U.S." referring to equipment "used by the NGOs" being returned to their "rightful owners" since much of the expelled NGO equipment is actually USG property now stolen by the regime.

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COMMENT  
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¶15. (SBU) We agree that Ameerah Haq and company probably did accomplish as much as can be expected from this process. They established that real gaps exist in Darfur, that the problems will worsen over time if not treated, and they got a brutal and paranoid regime to sign off on that alarming analysis. That is something but it is not enough. To date, the ad-hoc, one-off measures, particularly WFP's two-month food distribution, have prevented a major humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur. However, humanitarian agencies and international donors remain extremely concerned that the region will face major food, health, sanitation, and water crises within a month or two unless the Sudanese government, UN agencies, and remaining NGOs urgently establish longer-term and sustainable systems to continue the level of assistance provided by the NGOs until March 4. Although the Sudanese government claims that all gaps are covered, the results of the assessment include data regarding hundreds of thousands of individuals without health care, thousands without supplemental feeding, and the one-off nature of the current support especially food aid.

¶16. (SBU) The successes of the joint assessment are two-fold: first, the UN has exhaustively catalogued the needs that must be answered; and second, with the signature of HAC Commissioner Hassabo, Sudanese authorities are now on the hook should there be a humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Although the GNU has committed itself to provide full support for remaining NGOs including fast-tracking technical agreements and establishing local, state, and federal monitoring to assure that appropriate levels of support continue, adequate follow-through is now spelled out in the document as the GNU's responsibility. In order to prevent a public health crisis, the GNU has also committed to providing salaries, staff, and health supplies through the end of 2009. The UN and international donors applaud these gestures and hope they will come to fruition and not become yet another unfulfilled or redirected promise. Aside from not reversing the fateful decision to expel the NGOs, the assessment suffers from another fatal flaw: in the end, it relies on the same regime which created these deteriorating conditions to prevent them in the future. The UN did a credible job standing up to pressure and establishing the truth, but the Sudanese regime often does its worst after it signs an agreement and can begin to slowly empty it over time of any meaning or substance while the world's attention is distracted with the next crisis. All donors, including the U.S., will need to do our own monitoring, as well as support expanded UN monitoring of the humanitarian needs to confirm that GNU promises are kept.

FERNANDEZ